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ABSTRACT

Three ways to think about decision making in public high schools are to think about the types of decisions that are made, the approaches to the decision-making process, and the principles underlying decision making. The Design Group for New Designs for the Comprehensive High School refers to a set of principles as design specifications. They have proposed a set of eight design specifications that could guide future approaches to decision making in the comprehensive high school: (1) designs should be deeply rooted in a purpose that is aligned with the vision of the school; (2) decision making should begin at the site of learning, yet be decentered; (3) decisions should make things better for all, not just different for some; (4) decisions are the voice of staff, students, partners, and the broader community; (5) decision making should still be authoritative, not democratic--some decisions are better than others and authority is vested unequally; (6) decision making should have access to the rich resources of all the other partners; (7) decision making should be yes-based rather than no-based, assuming waivers or variances are already under local control or will be granted by the controlling element; and (8) decisions are transitional between traditional and progressive ways of acting. Issues raised include what the existence of a set of design specifications do for an organization and whether specifications can be defended in the global community. (Contains 32 references.) (YLB)

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LEARNING DECISION MAKING: SPECIFICATIONS TO GUIDE PROCESSES IN FUTURE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

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LEARNING DECISION MAKING: SPECIFICATIONS TO GUIDE PROCESSES IN FUTURE COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

The capacity to make decisions is an important part of being an educated person and should therefore be important to educators and to learners. Copa (1992) explains the significance of decision making this way: "Educated persons have practical intelligence which enables them to effectively handle the complexity and challenge of everyday life requiring clear attention to aims, context, and consequences of action (p. 11). This speaks to the need for the school to model what is being taught. It further suggests that school redesign groups need to consider the design specifications for the decision making process in the same disciplined way that they consider the other aspects of schooling such as learning process, the organization of learners, facilities, and costs. The decision making processes that are put into place should ultimately provide some structure for handling the day-to-day challenges and dilemmas that will be present in the new high school.

In the work of educating students in the comprehensive high school of the future, practical problems will arise. In order to resolve them, the people in the school community will need to find an approach to the problem and decide what should be done. Using the ideas of Brown (1977), Copa offers a meaning for practical problem:

> . . . the [practical] problem is created by a discrepancy between a desired state of affairs in places such as work or family life and society in general. Resolution requires a conceptual understanding of the desired state of affairs and well-being as a prerequisite to stating the problem phrased as "What should I (we) do about . . . ?" Practical problems require action for resolution—they cannot merely be studied. Since they have consequences for self and others, they have moral and aesthetic dimensions. (p. 79)

Copa's explanation of practical problems emphasizes the connection between problems and taking action. The problem-action connection is what distinguishes practical problems from theoretical problems, which can merely be studied. The purpose of this paper is to propose a set of design specifications for decision making processes in the future high school that will be fully aligned with the vision and the character of this school design.

There are three ways to think about decision making in public high schools. These ways are to think about the types of decisions that are made, the approaches to the decision-making process, and the principles underlying decision making. While a good deal can be

written about the first two ways to think about decision making, they will only be touched-on lightly in this paper. The main purpose of this paper is to identify a set of principles—or design specifications—that should guide future decision-making processes and decisions in the comprehensive high school. This set of specifications, like the specifications developed in the other phases of this research project, suggests some key ideas for school design teams to discuss and possibly adapt to their own work.

Types of Decisions

Redesigning the high school is the act of making decisions. When the redesign decisions are analyzed as to type, several categories or types of decisions emerge. Bolman and Deal (1991) have studied the redesign experiences of educational and business organizations and they suggest one list of general categories for the types of decisions. The types are: (a) decisions on meaning (e.g., political, human, structural); (b) decisions on standards (e.g., external, customers, internal); (c) decisions on timing (e.g., when, for whom, how intensive); (d) decisions on resources (e.g., acquisition, use, distribution); (e) decisions about organization (e.g., which functions need tight standards, which functions will thrive on loose organization); and (f) decisions on motivation (e.g., buy-in, ownership, compliance, directive).

Other groups interested in redesigning the comprehensive high school may select different design structures that emphasize other types of decisions.. For example, the redesign committee for the fictional Franklin High School (Sizer, 1992) used the following sections in its final report: beliefs, the basic design, the curriculum, exhibitions, structure, and some practicalities. A second example comes from Grant (1988) who describes the redesign experience in an actual school—Hamilton High School. An improvement committee of Hamilton staff members made an effort to change the moral and intellectual life at Hamilton. An analysis of their meeting transcripts revealed that the dialogue unfolded in five stages: (a) testing of the need for change, (b) doubt and resistance, (c) emergence of belief that common action was possible, (d) development of shared meaning about desirable policies and practices, and (e) proposal of a strategy for school-wide change (p. 248). The five stages related to the types of decisions made by the Hamilton staff.

The decision in the New Designs project were brought under the discipline of the design-down process that is often associated with outcome-based education systems (Spady, 1988). In this project the decisions were divided into phases that were focused on learner outcomes, learning processes, learning organization and partnerships, learning staff, learning environment, and cost. These ideas are the substance of the complete collection of research and synthesis papers and the final report.

Approaches to Decision Making Process

The second way to think about decision making is to think about some of the approaches to decision-making that could possibly be used to make decisions in the redesigned high school. In order to do this, it is necessary to identify and study the approaches to decision making that are currently used in school organizations that came closest to the desired state of affairs for the ideal school that was envisioned. For example, excellent vocational schools were studied by Mitchell, Russell, and Benson (1989) and Wardlow, Swanson, and Migler (1992). They discovered that decisions often were made at the school site. In both studies, investigators noted that the school staff collaborated to make decision about issues that affected the quality of the programs.

Collaborative, Site-based Decision Making

Following the lead of the investigators mentioned above, the research staff reviewed currently-used decision-making models that are considered to be site-based and more collaborative in nature. Several decision-making processes were identified as useful for dealing with practical school problems; generally the most useful were described as decentralized.

The approaches to decision-making within the school are summarized in Table F.1 in a 2 x 2 matrix using two variables, staff and school, according to the possible intensity or inclusiveness of staff and school that typically is involved. For example, labor-management committees typically involve some teachers making group decisions, which affect one program or a portion of one school.

Table F.1
Decision-making Models Within the School

	Part of the school	The entire school
Some staff	Labor-management committees	Charter schools
	Teaching teams	Strategic planning
	School-within-a-school	Site-based management
All staff	Houses	Schools with community
	School-within-a-school	Shared decision-making
	Quality circles	Focused schools

When the project's research staff analyzed these models further, common steps or phases of the decision-making process were identified. As noted above, there was an emphasis on local decision making by team members. It was observed that participants usually gave attention to an aim or mission of the school. They moved their consideration next into the specific context and kept a focus on opportunities or alternatives, then to consequences, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Decision-making processes seemed to be based on practical reasoning.

Decision Making to Support Practical Reasoning

Copa explains that practical reasoning is particularly useful for solving practical problems such as those which arise in the course of everyday life, including school life. Practical reasoning is a systematic, reflective process requiring deliberation (often with others) and used a variety of kinds of knowledge—facts, interpretations, and values. Elements of practical reasoning include: (a) determining aims or desired state of affairs; (b) studying and interpreting contextual information; (c) developing alternative actions; (d) evaluating consequences; (e) making judgments; (f) taking actions; and (g) evaluating and monitoring action.

Practical reasoning requires attention to the resolution process and its results; both what and how things will be done. The process is relational because it involves open conversation with others. The process is normative because it seeks value standards resulting in the greatest good. If practical reasoning is used reflectively and systematically,

it provides a framework and process that can successfully deal with the complexity and challenge of practical problems (p. 98-99).

Design Specifications of the Decision Making Process

The principles underlying decision-making are the third way that one could think about and organize the decision making in the high school. In the project, we have referred to a set of principles as *design specifications* . As used in the previous research and synthesis papers, design specifications refer to the guiding principles that influence the actions, and explain the underlying values and beliefs about each phase of the school redesign process. In this paper the Design Group proposes a set of eight design specifications that could guide future approaches to decision-making in the comprehensive high school.

Prior to proposing the specifications the Design Group and project staff studied and discussed the experiences of educators and business managers with organizational decision making. In organizations with a clear focus, decision-making occurs closer to problem situations, involved individuals, and resources. Decisions and processes tended to be timely and informed by adequate and accurate information. Data-rich environments enhanced the abilities of self-diagnosis and self-correction. At a meeting, the Group members discussed decision making as it was experienced in their schools and communities. They agreed that the above features described some characteristics of the desired decision-making processes for the New Designs school. But, they emphasized, the major objective should be *good* decisions. They pointed out that any number of poor decisions have been made using rational decision-making processes, and vice versa. Although *good* had many individual meanings, in this project the Design Group felt there was consensus that *good* begins with the words of the learner outcomes and reaches for the ideals represented by the school's signature. Good decisions and processes would help "educate students to live in a multi-cultural world, to face the challenge of reconciling differences and community, and to address what it means to have a voice in shaping one's future." (Giroux, p. 7).

After a good deal of discussion, the staff proposed eight design specifications that should guide decision-making processes in the New Designs high schools. They

presumed that these specifications should make things better—not simply different—in three problem areas: (a) the mismatch between school and life, (b) the inequity of educational opportunities, and (c) the lack of organizational effectiveness.

Specification One: Decisions ought to be deeply rooted in and aligned with the vision of the school.

Being vision-driven gives consistency and coherence to decisions. A hazy vision or the multiple purposes of most public comprehensive high schools often are major barriers for those with hopes of restructuring. For this reason the Design Group recognized that New Designs schools need to have a signature and a set of learner outcomes that express specialness and articulate a purpose or purposes. The signature was to be a symbolic representation of that specialness.

In some localized circumstances, communities and educational staff have been able to operate public high schools with a specific purpose or focus. Recently, three authors reported that success is more likely to occur at higher levels for more students at focused high schools (Hill, Foster, and Gendler, 1990; Mitchell, Russell, and Benson, 1989; Crain, Heebner, and Si, 1992). Similar success is reported by some of the smaller pilot schools from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) State-Vocational Education Consortium that are attempting to advance the academic competencies of general and vocational students (Bottoms, 1991). Where educators and students have been able to be more clear about their purposes and are action-oriented, improved results are evident.

Specification Two: Decision making should begin at the site of learning; yet, it should be de-centered.

Schools with an apparent focus or character are inevitably managed at the site (Hill, Foster, and Gendler, 1990). Site-managed schools are "a good locus for improvement," according to Walberg and Lane (1989) who studied the effect of restructuring legislation on Chicago's public schools. They concluded that "At a time when state legislators, community reform groups, parents, and unions vie for control of education, the individual school may be the best place to reconcile competing claims with local conditions and preferences" (p. 16).

The concept of de-centered is taken from the psychological works of Jean Piaget. It implies the taking of perspectives of other people in the act of decision making or

judgments as a presupposition to having reached the state of individual autonomy. One of the desired characteristics of New Designs staff is the ability to reflect de-centered positions in collaborative decision making (Lum, Copa, and Pease, 1992, p. 20).

The ideal of site-based, de-centered decision making is currently associated with high performance work places. High performance "is a way of organizing, or an organizational architecture, which brings together work, people, technology, and information in a manner that optimizes the congruence or *fit* among them in order to produce high performance, specifically in terms of the effective response to customer requirements and other environmental demands and opportunities" (Delta Consulting Group, Change/3 (no date), p. 31).

The argument for high performance school designs was developed by the National Center of Education and the Economy (1991) and reaffirmed by the second report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) (1992). The SCANS Commission reports:

> Clearly, all of us—as individuals, communities, employers, and a nation—have reached a point of decision. We can choose between raising productivity through a conscious effort to build an equitable, high-skills, high-wage future, or we can ignore the productivity side of the economic equation by settling for a low-skill, low-wage economy and its inevitable accompaniment, declining standards of living for most. We dare not choose badly. (p. 4)

In an address to the AFL-CIO about the key elements of high performance work organization, Marshall (1991) pointed out that decentralizing decisions to the point of contact with the actual work and customers is critical. He stated that a participative management system means that you promote horizontal cooperation and, most important of all, you decentralize decisions to the point of production or to the point of contact with the customers because that is where the work really gets done.

Site-managed, de-centered decision making processes are a key factor in organizations that are focused on total quality (TQ). Currently some schools are attempting to adapt fundamental TQ principles to education according to publications by Packer and Wirt (1989), Mt. Edgecumbe High School (1991), Schmidt and Finnigan (1992), Glasser (1991), and Governor's Quality Award (1992)). It is not the intent to summarize the

influence of the total quality movement in this paper. The chapter "TQM in Government and Education" in Schmidt and Finnigan's book provides an up-to-date summary. Rather, it would seem that two ingredients are markers of initiatives where total quality processes resulted in constantly-improving products and services. These ingredients are: (a) a constancy of purpose for the improvement of products and services, and (b) a fundamental belief that the purpose is only achievable when the people in the organization take the perspective of the customer and then are directly invested in the decision making processes.

Specification Three: Decisions ought to make things better for all, not just different for some.

The design intentions are to somehow make "school work for all students" (Chion-Kenney, 1992, p. i), including those who currently benefit from inequitable distribution of school resources. Oakes and Lipton (1990) were inspired by John Dewey when they wrote *Making the Best of Schools*. Dewey, they explain, offered a practical and elegant guide for making decisions about what's best. "What the best and wisest [parents want for their] own child, that must the community want for all of its children" (p. xiv). Oakes and Lipton explained that they had a similar purpose in mind when they wrote their book:

> We argue that the same practices that make school better for any one child—your child—will make schooling better for all children. The best schools are those in which *all* children—not just a few—are believed to be capable, where all are offered rich learning opportunities, help to rigorous intellectual standards, and expected to succeed. To make the best of all schools, we need look no further than the schools we would want for our own children. (p. xi)

The Design Group's resolution that comprehensive high school be better for all students, not simply different for some, expresses some of the same hopefulness that comes through when business and labor leaders discuss high performance work systems and total quality management.

Specification Four: Decisions are the voice of staff, students, partners, and the broader community.

The decision-making process should recognize that achieving the purpose of better educational outcomes for all is only achievable when all learning partners can expect to speak to these purposes and expect to know that they've been heard. This is especially true for teacher who will bear the burden of reform and restructuring on a daily bases.

A school that encourages initiative and responsibility also alters the power roles of the staff, students, and community partners who work and learn at the school. Hill and Bonan (1991) mention several of these changes that occur when decision making involves more people from the school community: (a) superintendent encourages independent decision making, (b) school board loses the ability to micro-manage through the superintendent, (c) local teacher union leader becomes partner with superintendent, (d) principals and school-level steward change from confrontation to collaboration[1], (e) scope of teacher's union contract narrows as staff selection is done at the school level, (f) central office coordinators begin to advise, rather than control, (g) schools become more distinctive and parents have stronger grounds on which to choose their child's school, (h) private entrepreneurs or business-led civic groups will provide information, and (i) school staff will face stronger incentives to maintain parents' confidence and loyalty.

Specification Five: Decision making should be authoritative, not democratic; some decisions are better than others and authority is vested unequally.

Authority is that power to act, legitimated by the group, as a means of making progress toward their goals (Grant, 1988, p. 122). The unsettled schools of the 1970s may be remembered by some as a time of confused authority as they remember the decade's increased drug use, student-selected curriculum, open campus, and declining test scores. An administrator in the Atlanta area focus group commented that the 1980s was a time of restoring order in the high school and the 1990s will be a time to extend understanding of the concept of authority. The way in which authority is understood is likely to be transformed by the increased experience with and understanding of site-based decision making, high performance work systems, and total quality management principles by those who have supervisory responsibility in educational settings.

Sergiovanni (1992) describes five bases for educational supervisory authority and suggests two which may be more legitimate in high schools that intend to operate as learning communities. The five bases are bureaucratic, psychological, technical-rational, professional, and moral. Bureaucratic authority comes from rules and regulations.

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[1]The new partnership roles for labor and management are also foreseen by the prestigious Collective Bargaining Forum, a group of chief executive officers from major companies, international union presidents, and the presidents of the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO and the National Association of Manufacturers. This group strongly encourages the move in this direction in their report (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

Psychological authority comes in the form of leadership, motivational technology, and human relations skills. Technical-rational authority uses the form of evidence derived from logic and scientific research. These three are used most frequently in schools that operate as processing plants; where teaching is thought to be an individual practice. He suggests that if the metaphor of schooling would be changed from that of a processing plant to a learning community, (such as the proposed New Designs environment), then teaching as a collective practice would emerge. Professional and moral authority would provide the bases for supervision. Professional authority comes in the form of informed and seasoned craft knowledge and personal expertness. Moral authority arises from widely-shared values, ideas, and ideals. Teachers are expected to respond to shared commitments and interdependence (pp. 204-205).

Hill, Foster, and Gendler (1990) suggest in a more provocative way that authority and decision making are important. "Focused schools are not democracies" (p. 39), they claim. Rather, focused schools are more like tight-loose organizations. By this the author means that the day-to-day decisions are made by open discussion and negotiation, but the prior agreement on the focus of the school constrains the arguments and provides the grounds for the resolutions of disagreements. The implicit understanding about focus, which staff and students share, establishes the boundaries of debate.

An investigation of five site-based managed high schools by Hill and Bonan (1991) discovered a similar tight-loose relationship between external universal standards and the internal school regulations. They say:

> In the long-term interests of students, schools cannot become laws unto themselves. They must somehow maintain universal standards that reflect a student's ability to succeed in both higher education and the labor market and society's need for competent, productive, and ethical citizens. The preservation of these standards in a system of lightly regulated schools is the central challenge of education reform. (p. 70)

Sizer's views (1992) would seem to agree with this specification. He states that "instead of the hierarchical bureaucracy, the school's decisions must be guided by a policy of unqualified delegated authority" (p. 172). This policy assumes that schools can maintain their own focus and integrity. He goes on to say that "expecting [schools] to be the same denies reality, and insisting that they be the same guarantees mediocrity " (p. 172).

With total quality management, experienced business and labor leaders emphasize the type of authoritative role that leaders must assume while working with an empowered work force. First, they say that the decision to focus on quality must be made by the top leadership. Next, authoritative leadership helps other employees decide to buy-in to the quality premise or look for other employment. Finally, the conflicts around resource allocations are resolved according to the purposes of the organization.

New Designs for the Comprehensive High School will have an agreed-upon signature and learner outcomes representing the values of equitable educational access and high achievement for all students. Decisions and decision-making processes that maintain the meaning of the signature should be authoritative. Within that tighter authority, the day-to-day decisions should be made by the stakeholders involved and be loosely organized.

Specification Six: Decision making should have access to the rich resources of all of the other partners.

Partnerships will be an essential part of the organization, learning process, and signature and learner outcomes of the New Designs prototypes. Here, once again, the discipline of the design-down process reinforces the fact that it is not possible to deliver on earlier specifications without partnerships. For example, learner outcomes include demonstrations of knowledge, skills, and abilities to contribute as a citizen to the community and the economic well-being of society. The curriculum would be integrated so that connections between disciplines were obvious. It should be useful in real life situations. Instruction in learning would emphasize experiential, contextual and collaborative processes. Assessment would measure achievement of standards based on the performances and virtues most valued in society.

Without real-life partners, it would be difficult to claim that learning is authentic, to benefit from the integration of academic and vocational education, or to experience value-conflicts that are so natural within a democracy. The rich resources of learning partners are needed: parents and families, businesses and labor, community organizations, elementary and post-secondary educational institutions, and other students and staff. The collaborative involvement of learning partnerships provides the venue for demonstrations and contributions, the real-life core of the integrated curriculum, the conditions for experiential learning, and the wider diversity of the community.

Decisions and decision-making processes should be organized and implemented in ways that partners can cooperate and collaborate. Partners that participate with a *want-to, want-to* motivation, based on a level of trust built up through past activities, seem most likely to cooperate and collaborate with the learning decisions of the schools.

Specification Seven: Decision making should be *yes-based* rather than *no-based;* assumes waivers or variances are already under local control or will be granted by the controlling element.

Comprehensive high schools try to serve multiple purposes and many constituent groups. One result is that the school tends to operate under many rules rather than a few guiding principles. These rules take on the power of the law—school boards are increasingly relying on their lawyers in decision-making. School administrators are expected to learn about the full scope of rules and regulations in their graduate studies. Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan (1990) explain that public secondary schools are *open systems* that come under the influence of numerous insiders and outsiders. The control of the public high school includes both the legal and extra legal forces of influence. Control is exercised through decision-making activities that occur in the formal structures of school government, within the activities of interest groups, and with any other forces that appear to control the schools (p. 9). The authors suggest that there are seven control elements: (a) demographic (the number and character of adults and students in a particular school or school district, and the cultural traditions and values they hold); (b) legal (state and federal constitutions, statutes, regulations, and case law); (c) structural (governmental, official organization, and unofficial organizational arrangements); (d) ideational (arise from the concepts and values people hold); (e) knowledge (general and special knowledge, or expertise); (f) financial (resources or federal, state, and local money, and its use); and (g) network (the horizontal and vertical relationships of schools and school district to other agencies and organizations). The rules and comfortable traditions associated with each create inertia.

Schools that are relatively stable and enjoy the support of their communities often are most affected by this inertia and have many established traditions. New initiatives are often aborted before they've taken hold. *No* is more often the answer to new proposals than is *yes* simply because the status quo does not disturb the rules or the traditions. Community support and school conformity are correlated.

Exemplary schools may be on the cusp of conformity., but not always encouraged to continuously improve. Mitchell, Russell, & Benson (1989) noted that "it is ironic that schools which are not doing a good job are the ones which receive more money.... The schools that are exemplary struggle to maintain their momentum. As they become more successful and student outcomes improve, resources are taken away from them" (p. 194). This must change in the future.

The Design Group specified that the future New Designs comprehensive high schools will operate in an environment where site-based management has evolved somewhat and the recommendations for national standards have survived the opening rounds of political and legal challenges and are taking effect. In this case, the comprehensive high schools can be lightly regulated and conscious of some universal standards of achievement. The characteristics of the decisions and decision making will reflect this newer reality.

Specification Eight: Decisions are transitional between traditional and progressive ways of acting

The Design Group expects that comprehensive high schools in the future will continuously improve. Improvement will stimulate new ideas, activity, and partnerships. There will be a need for updated facilities and other structural changes as a result of new innovations. In other words, good high schools will be alive; they will grow and adapt to new opportunities.

This ability to survive and thrive in the transition from schools as they are today and should be tomorrow came up repeatedly in focus groups and discussions during each research phase. Themes related to the old way and the new way were evident in much of the theoretical writing about educational reform and business-labor restructuring. Key words, or themes, are summarized in Table F.2.

Table F.2

Traditional vs. Progressive Approaches to Decision Making.

The old way as:	The new way as:
neo-traditional	neo-progressive (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1992)
authoritative	participatory (most sources)
bureaucratic	professional/moral (Sergiovanni, 1992)
top down	site based (Sizer, Oakes)
external standards	internal values (Bolman & Deal)
administrative	focused (Hill, 1991)
low skill/low wage	high performance (Marshall, SCANS)

The Design Group expects that future decision making will fuse the best ideas from old ways and the new way. A site-base managed school has this opportunity.

The reality of moving to site-based, improvement-oriented decision making, according to the experienced education, business, and labor leaders on the design group, is that it is "a race without a finish line" In the meantime, schools are operating. Old and new decision-making processes are intricately related to each other. Each evolves into the other according to the local conditions and personnel. New Designs environment decisions and decision-making processes must be capable of going through transitions from old ways to a new way. Specifications for staff, the facilities, and the technology also call for the ability to make transitions, to be flexible, and to be able to take up new roles at the right times. The right time will be different in every situation.

Summary

The following eight design specifications should guide the decision-making processes in the comprehensive high school of the future.

1. Decisions ought to be deeply rooted in a purpose which is aligned with the vision of the school.

2. Decision making should begin at the site of learning; yet, it should be de-centered.

3. Decisions ought to make things better for all, not just different for some.

4. Decisions are the voice of staff, students, partners, and the broader community.

5. Decision making should still be authoritative, not democratic; some decisions are better than others and authority is vested unequally.

6. Decision making should have access to the rich resources of all of the other partners.

7. Decision making should be *yes-based* rather than *no-based*; assumes waivers or variances are already under local control or will be granted by the controlling element.

8. Decisions are transitional between traditional and progressive ways of acting.

Issues

The design specifications for decision-making process are the Design Group's judgment about the desired future in schools that restructure in the direction suggested in the research report. This judgment is open to question. Four issues to debate come to mind. Others need to be added.

1. What does the existence of a set of guiding principles (or design specifications) do for an organization? Will they serve to guide or to limit? The decision to design a focused high school may possibly provide a ceiling for those who might work and learn in the school if it excludes people whose vision surpasses the group's efforts? The community, students, and staff should be encouraged to listen for ,and .applaud, better ideas and the otherness of decisions.

2. Have these specifications been conceived within a moral and justifiable ethic of work and learning? The Design Group has said that decision making should reach

for higher educational attainment for more learners; this might be thought of as a compoundment of improvement. But, there are risks associated with such a substantial goal. For example, educational attainment measured by test scores was linked to a class and racially-based organization of the learners and curriculum. In the designs, educational attainment measured by high performance may be linked to other ways of organization that could discriminate against certain groups of learners.

3. Are those challenged to establish new designs for the high school able to deal with the ups and downs of making the effort? Setting goals also sets up failure, and increasing productivity may lead to exploitation. In addition, higher standards leaves some behind, and apathy is only a short way away from empowerment.

4. The Design Group expects that graduates will be able to participate fully in a diverse, complex, and changing world environment. In light of the specification that the staff of the school should also represent individually and collectively the desired learner outcomes, can these decision-making specifications be defended in the global community and to individuals who normally would not openly challenge? It is also necessary to learn how to consider others who may be uncomfortable with notions of group participation, authority, recognition, and evaluation.

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